



THE ASSAM GAZETTE

অসাধাৰণ

EXTRAORDINARY

প্ৰাপ্ত কৰ্তৃত্ব দ্বাৰা প্ৰকাশিত

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No. 47 Dispur, Thursday, 25th January, 2024, 5th Magha, 1945 (S. E.)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
ORDERS BY THE GOVERNOR
FISHERY DEPARTMENT

NOTIFICATION

The 11th January, 2024

No. FISH.35/2023/150.-

Sub: Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for restricting import/stock/Sale of Fish imported from other selfsufficient States by Road/River Route using formaldehyde keeping fish in marketable condition for long duration.

Ref: Order/direction of the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, Eastern Zone Bench, Kolkata vide order dated 27.9.2023 in Original Application No 60/2023/EZ (Arun Das Vs The Union of India & Ors).

INTRODUCTION:

State of Assam is deficient in Fish production whereas majority of the population consume fish . To make up the deficit in supply, fish is imported from other States having sufficient or surplus production like Andhra Pradesh and other such States from far off South India.

The exporter of such fish mostly use road transport which takes considerable time from the South of the Country to reach the other corner of North East. But such vehicles lack proper refrigeration facilities. So the unscrupulous traders use

Formaldehyde to keep such fishes fresh during transit as well as in storage on arrival by wholesalers before such fish reaches Retail market points throughout the State.

IMPACT OF FORMALDEHYDE IN HUMAN BODY:

It is submitted that Formaldehyde is an organic compound with the Formula CH_2O and structure HCHO . The compound is a pungent colourless gas that polymerizes spontaneously into Para formaldehyde, It is stored as aqueous solutions which consists mainly of the hydrate $\text{CH}(\text{OH})_2$. Formaldehyde is used by unscrupulous traders to prevent spoilage and keep fish in marketable condition for long duration.

It is worthwhile to mention that the solution is easily available in market. Fish contaminated with huge quantity of formaldehyde consumed by human is harmful and may cause severe abdominal pain, vomiting, renal injury even may be fatal in extreme cases.

A recent study was conducted by a Team from the Department of Fish Processing Technology & Engineering, College of Fisheries, Central Agricultural University, Tripura and the result of the study showed adverse impact on human health as well as quality of the fish.

Another study conducted by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) categorized formaldehyde in Group 2A "as probably carcinogenic to human" (IARC 2004).

LACK OF PROPER INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES FOR STORAGE AND TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

The cause of such use of Formaldehyde is lack of appropriate post harvest management infrastructure for storage, inadequate insulation during domestic transportation and lack of warehousing facilities with built in refrigeration facilities for bulk storage of fish at Whole Sale markets of the State.

NECESSITY OF CARRYING OUT TESTS ON FISH FOR DETECTION OF FORMALDEHYDE :

It is obvious that use of formaldehyde in fishes is not visible to the human eye nor it can be detected by smell. So to the human eye, the fish looks normal and fresh like a normal fresh fish.

Thus Govt of Assam took into earnest consideration the recent reports of the team of Nagaon College wherein samples collected found to contain during Laboratory

Tests formaldehyde with alarming percentage of 14.95 to 14.99 against permissible limit 4 mg/Kg or 0.0004%.

Since it is matter of public health, it was widely reported in Print & Electronic media eventually the Hon'ble High Court as well as National Green Tribunal took cognizance of the matter based on Public Interest Litigation filed by a few conscious citizens.

Hence to stop the menace considering the harmful affect on human body due to consumption fish laced with formaldehyde, now Govt has proposed some administrative measures initially in the form of SOP is necessary.

CONSTITUTION OF TASK FORCE FOR EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF THE SOP

The whole exercise shall be supervised and monitored by State and District level Task Force which will review the whole issue periodically and take corrective /remedial measures.

(1). STATE LEVEL TASK FORCE (STF):

The State Level Task Force will be under overall control and management of Fishery Department comprising of following officials :

- (i) The Senior Most Secretary of Fishery Department as Chairman.
- (ii) The Dean, College of Fisheries, AAU, Raha.
- (iii) The Director of Fisheries, Assam, Convener.
- (iv) The Marketing Officer, Directorate of Fisheries, Assam, Co- Convener.
- (v) Representative of Food Safety Department not below the rank of Joint Secretary.
- (vi) Representative of Health & FW Department not below the rank of Joint Secretary.
- (vii) One Senior Police Officer of the rank of DIG representing DGP, Assam.
- (viii) Head, ICAR–Central Inland Fisheries Institute (CIFRI), NER, Guwahati for technical guidance/assistance.
- (ix) One representative of State Public Health Analyst.

The State Level Task Force will sit quarterly and review the situation with reports from District Task Force and issue further direction where necessary to enforce proper monitoring and follow up action to stop the harmful use of formalin in imported fish sold in the markets of the State

(2) DISTRICT LEVEL TASK FORCE (DTF)

Similarly District Level Task Force will be constituted in all the districts of the State which will be responsible for enforcement of the provisions of the SOP in each district comprising of following officials:

- (i) The District Commissioner or his representative preferably the ADC (Health) as Chairman.
- (ii) The District Fishery Development Officer, Convener.
- (iii) Notified Nodal Officer of the district under District Fishery Development Officer.
- (iv) One representative of Superintendent of Police not below the rank of Deputy of Superintendent of Police.
- (v) Food Safety Inspector.
- (vi) One Representative of Health Department under Joint Director of Health Services.
- (vii) One Representative of Transport Department under District Transport Officer preferably Enforcement Inspector.

DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF GOVT OFFICIALS OF CONCERNED DEPARTMENTS LIKE FISHERY & FOOD SAFETY & OTHERS AS MEMBERS OF DTF :

1. The Nodal Officer of Fishery Department along with Food Safety Inspector in Dhubri and Kokrajhar districts with Inter State Border Check Gate at Chagolia in Dhubri District and Sreerampur in Kokrajhar district will arrange conduct of tests/checks at regular intervals at such Check gates on vehicles carrying imported fish for the State with taking samples and also verify the documents like Challan /Bills with certificate, if any issued by authority of exporting State whether such imported fish are free from formalin. They will be assisted by Police of the concerned PS/OP under whose jurisdiction the Inter-State Check Gate falls.

(Action: Nodal Officer, Fishery /FSI/Supdt of Police, Dhubri/Kokrajhar)

2. The Nodal Officer and FSI in other districts will conduct checks in wholesale markets in each district where imported fishes are delivered including Test before such fish reach the Retail markets throughout such districts.

(Action: Nodal Officer , Fishery /FSI)

3. The vehicle carrying such imported fish must carry valid challan with the name of the consignee and details of consignment along with contact number including details of Consignor (supplier) of the State of origin for transportation to Assam and other details.

(Action: Nodal Officer /FSI)

4. The **CIFT Rapid Formalin testing Kit** will be used for testing samples for detection of Formaldehyde in such fish.

(Action: DFDOs /Nodal Officer of All district)

5. The fish samples so collected by the Food Safety Inspector as per their protocol will be sent to the State Public Health Laboratory, Guwahati for testing and analysis of the samples.

(Action: FSI & Public Health Analyst)

6. The vehicle containing contaminated fish, if detected during preliminary tests must not be allowed to proceed for delivery of such fish to retail markets as they could contain harmful preservative injurious to human health.

(Action: NO/ FSI/DTO of concerned District)

7. The vehicles carrying the contaminated fish will be detained by N.O./FSI and reported to the nearest Police Station for legal action through process of Law for confiscation and destroying with permission of the competent Court.

(Action: Supdt of Police & DTO of concerned District)

8. The Nodal officer shall maintain a data base of the samples collected for analysis, source of import along with the name of the traders with due information to the concerned FSO of that District as per Food Safety Standard Act.

(Action: N.O. Fishery)

9. For effective implementation, random checks are to be carried out in various wholesale and retail fish markets by the Nodal Officer of Fishery Department with assistance from subordinate officers/staff along with FSI from time to time.

(Action: Dist Task Force)

10. Such regulatory tests are to be carried out at regular intervals once in every month at district level especially in town areas where such imported fish have sufficient demand.

(Action: District Task Force)

11. The Task Force to conduct awareness campaigns among the Stakeholders on the impact of indiscriminate usage of formaldehyde and other such harmful chemicals

(Action: District Task Force)

12. Identification of the source of production/supply is important for necessary Remedial measures. Thus proper documentation of the farmers and traders is very important.

[DFDO/N.O (Fishery)]

13. Henceforth, the following information is to be maintained in registers by the Wholesale traders/Retailer of imported fish:

- Name of market whole sale/retail.
- Daily/ Weekly/Bi weekly market.
- Name of the supplier of imported fish with detail address, State of origin including contact number.
- Name, address and contact number(s) of source(s) of procurement of formalin by the local fish farmer/ trader/ supplier.

(Action: DFDO s/ Fishery Dept.)

14. The procedures outlined above is not exhaustive and State /District Task Force may suggest any other relevant issue as deem fit for inclusion in the SOP.

The procedures as outlined above will come into force with immediate effect.

RAKESH KUMAR

Commissioner and Secretary to the Government of Assam,
Fishery Department.